

PRESS BRIEFING

MODERATOR:
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U.S. COAST GUARD ATLANTIC AREA PUBLIC AFFAIRS

SPEAKERS:
KEN SALAZAR,
SECRETARY,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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OPERATOR: Welcome and thank you for standing by. All parties are on a listen-only mode until today's question-and-answer session of the conference. At that time, you may press *1 on your touchtone phone to ask a question. I would like to inform all parties that this call is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may disconnect at this time. I will now turn the call over to Lt. Cmdr. Wyman. Sir, you may begin the call.

LT. CMDR. ROB WYMAN: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Lt. Cmdr. Rob Wyman, the chief of the joint information center here at the unified area command. Thank you for attending today's press conference. With us today is Secretary Ken Salazar, S-A-L-A-Z-A-R, Department of Interior; Rear Adm. Mary Landry, L-A-N-D-R-Y, the federal on-scene coordinator; and Mr. Doug Suttles, S-U-T-T-L-E-S, BP's chief operating officer.

We'll begin today with opening remarks followed by questions from members in the audience. Following that, we will open up the phone lines for questions from them with time permitting. Today folks, we have approximately 25 minutes due to schedule constraints.

At this time I'd like to review the ground rules for our press conference. If you could please either silence or turn off your phones. Please raise your hand and wait to be called upon. We'll bring you a microphone as we are recording the audio for this press conference.

Please provide your name and affiliation before asking your question and please limit it to one question per person due to the time constraints. If time permits, we'll come back around for follow-ups after questions have been answered. And following the briefing here, we will have representatives who stay behind to help you if you have any additional questions. Thank you.

SECRETARY KEN SALAZAR: I am here in Robert, Louisiana, today because I wanted to make a statement that the president has directed me to make to everybody who is involved in this effort and that is that we shall not rest. We shall not take a day off until we get this problem resolved. We have been on this problem now going on 25 days. There are many different fronts on this battle. We are fighting them on all fronts and we are resolute in our effort to do everything we can to bring this problem under control.

Tomorrow in the afternoon at the – with Secretary Chu, we will essentially be pulling together the best of scientists once again to take a look at the different options that are on the table to kill this well. Secretary Chu's leadership, along with the Department of Energy labs and the United States Geological Survey, all of whom have been essentially focused on this issue with the command center in Houston, gives us hope that we will be able to make sure that whatever option is chosen to finally kill this well will in fact work. So we're looking forward to having that done tomorrow.

Today I was in Louisiana at the Fort Jackson Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. I was there because I wanted to see what is happening with respect to wildlife resources. The Department of Interior has 33 wildlife refuges along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. We have seven national parks units along the Gulf. And we have a responsibility as the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to make sure that we are doing everything that we can to protect the valuable ecological

resources of the Gulf Coast. We will continue to do everything that we can, throwing every ounce of effort that we have at the Department of the Interior to deal with this issue.

It has been for us as a team of a federal family an effort which has been relentless from day one and we're very proud of the fact that Secretary Napolitano and Adm. Allen and Adm. Landry and so many in the federal family have come together to deal with this disaster, which is creating huge problems for everybody who lives here in the Gulf Coast. We feel the pain. We are frustrated and we want to make sure that at the end of the day that no stone is left unturned relative to the effort that is concentrated on this matter. Adm. Landry.

REAR ADM. MARY LANDRY: Thank you. Thank you, Secretary Salazar. And certainly on behalf of everyone at this command post, we thank you for your leadership and the leadership of the president, all the members of the cabinet and Adm. Allen. We have felt the support since day one and we've had our six, we call it, and we thank you for the leadership and the hard work that's going on at the national level.

We also know there's a tremendous amount of work going on here in the Gulf Coast region from here on down right to the communities that are on the front lines, the communities that are affected. And the leadership of the governors of these Gulf Coast states along with their staffs or people and then the – everybody that's out there in the community fighting this every day. It's been a real team effort and we appreciate everybody's attention to this.

We continue to be challenged. And we've had good weather, thankfully. We've had weather that's allowed this to be fought offshore. You know, securing the source is one thing. I know Secretary Salazar and others are very focused on supporting and securing the source.

But as we fight this offshore, we certainly know that we've had good success till now – we've had minimal impact to the shoreline, we've had minimal impact to wildlife and to beaches and that. But we also know that there are fishermen that are out of work right now, so as we fight this offshore, our commitment is to try to mitigate the environmental and economic impact that's felt in this Gulf Coast region.

We did employ subsea dispersants. We began employing subsea dispersants as another tool in the toolkit. And in doing that, we want to thank everyone for their efforts in analyzing the three tests that we did prior to this decision. And also, I just want to assure everyone that we didn't cross the threshold lightly to employ this tool. This is a tool that will be analyzed and monitored. There's a very strict monitoring protocol in place offshore right now as we employ this tool.

And we have other tools as well. Obviously, controlled burn, skimming on the surface, work like that is ongoing. But the weather sometimes challenges us and we need to be flexible in how we apply these tools.

I want to thank especially the administrator of EPA, Lisa Jackson, and the head of NOAA, Dr. Lubchenco, who engaged the scientific community before we crossed this threshold in use of subsea dispersants. They had a wonderful dialogue and made themselves available so

that we could allay concerns that this is something that we didn't step into lightly. So I appreciate their leadership in that.

I also want to mention the fishery service, both NOAA and Louisiana, Mississippi, other fisheries communities – the national fishery service along with the coastal states' fisheries folks are really trying to mitigate and minimize the impact on both the recreational and the commercial fishermen and they're trying to do the best they can to analyze what's available out there, keeping people informed on what fisheries are open and where they can commercially and recreationally fish as we deal with the impacts of this oil spill.

And we will keep you apprised of that to mitigate the impact and we obviously are very committed to coming to the conclusion on this, to bringing this to resolution because we really do recognize and we will not rest because we know how much the American people and the Gulf Coast residents rely on us for this – to bring this to closure. Thank you.

DOUG SUTTLES: Thanks, Secretary Salazar and Adm. Landry. I just completed about an hour-and-a-half ago spending about one-and-a-half hours flying over the scene. And I thought the first thing I'd do is share my observations. It appears that the application of the subsea dispersant is actually working. The oil in the immediate vicinity of the well and the ships and rigs working in the area is diminished from previous observations.

In addition, our efforts as the admiral has already referenced, to fight this offshore appear to be working. There is oil on the sea. It is quite dispersed across the region, across the area shown on the map here on the right. And we're 23 days since the rig sank and the release began. And thankfully, we've had very little impact to shore, partly due to our efforts and undoubtedly partly due to Mother Nature's.

As the secretary previously mentioned, we're in the process of running the riser insertion tube. This is the method to contain the flow. This doesn't stop the flow, but it contains the flow. We hope to have that tool inserted by sometime late tonight. It's back on the seabed. We did have to pull it back to surface yesterday to make some adjustments so that we could connect it properly to the pipe work that connects it to the ship. But we expect to begin operation of that equipment overnight tonight.

The relief well activity continues. The development driller, the discovery driller III, the DDIII rig, which is drilling the first relief well, is on day 13 now. We're currently running the riser in the blowout preventer and will be completing the last of the test on that and should resume drilling over the next two days. And the development driller II, the DDII rig, which will start the second relief well, should spud or begin its drilling activity tomorrow.

As the admiral has already mentioned, the weather plays an important part in our ability to combat this spill, particularly offshore. Currently, unfortunately, the weather is not conducive to skimming or burning operations, but we expect that to change over the next day or so and allow us to use all of our tools over the balance of next week.

And lastly, I'd just mention that we continue to have a massive response underway. Over 17,000 people are now working on this effort. We've deployed now over 1.2 million feet of boom. We have somewhere around 38 aircraft working, 650 vessels. So it's a massive effort involving four states, members of the government, BP individuals and numerous, numerous contractors and I'd just like to extend my thanks to all of those people whose efforts are making us have some success. Thank you.

LT. CMDR. WYMAN: At this point, we'll go ahead and take questions from members of the media and the audience.

Q: Jeffrey Collins with the Associated Press. Mr. Suttles, do you think there were design or execution problems with the cement job on the Deepwater Horizon and have y'all done any independent testing to verify whether or not the job had problems or was done correctly?

MR. SUTTLES: Well, I should actually say that my only role in this, which I started working on this two hours after the event began, has been to deal with the response and to lead our, BP's response efforts. I am not involved in the investigation activity, so I'm just not in a place to be able to comment on that.

LT. CMDR. WYMAN: Next question.

Q: (Shaila Dewan ?) with The New York Times. Gov. Jindal has expressed concern that there has been a lot attention paid to where the oil is on the surface, what we can see. How much do we know about where the oil underwater is? Is that being modeled or are we just waiting for it to wash up on shore to see where it is? And you know, are we going to expect to see more of these tar balls coming up to shore? What's the plan for that?

SEC. SALAZAR: I'm going to have Adm. Landry comment on that in just a minute, but let me tell you the direction of the president of the United States. And that is we want to be transparent with the entire nation. The nation requires that of us and so any information that we have we need to make available.

It is a difficult thing to measure and so there are lots of guesses out there in terms of the amount of flow and the quantity of oil that has already gone out to sea, the amount of oil that has already been cleaned up. But whatever information it is that we have as a government, we want to make available to everybody. And I will have Adm. Landry comment in addition to that.

REAR ADM. LANDRY: Yeah, we're working very closely with Gov. Jindal and his staff. And certainly we had some visuals on some oil that was dispersed that was sitting about 18 inches below the water column and we tracked that for how it might come into shore. What we're seeing on the shoreline is tar balls, is some ribbons of emulsified oil. These are not – it's not a huge swath of shoreline that's covered. And we have teams right away ready to respond to that spill and clean that up.

What we are also doing is trying to communicate with everybody. And we've taken information that we knew about the oil and we're trying to translate it to pictures we're getting

on these coastlines, whether it's tar balls or the emulsified ribbons. What does it exactly look like? Displaying those pictures on a website and explaining how we would approach the cleanup, so that we can mitigate people's concerns that there's something out there that's unknown.

We have a pretty good handle on the oil we're dealing with. We have a very good handle on the oil we're dealing with, both at the source, through the water column and on the surface and as it hits the shoreline and we're tracking it constantly.

So I would just refer people to the websites, take a look. We're certainly going to communicate this to all the Gulf Coast residents as well through their states, through their counties, through their parishes, so that everybody has an understanding of the fate of the oil. And we really apologize if people are concerned out there because they haven't gotten enough information. We are pushing this information out and we will continue to do that to allay people's concerns that there's some looming massive amounts of oil that are unknown to anyone. That's not the case.

SEC. SALAZAR: The man in the middle.

Q: Hi. This is Ed Lavendera with CNN. Question about the dispersants. I guess to you, Mr. Suttles. How much was in store already that you guys had used – have been able to use and have you put out an order for more? I guess I'm getting to the issue of there are many people who believe that there are less toxic, more environmentally friendlier, cheaper ways of doing this. And there's some concern that orders have gone out for more dispersants. And I guess people are wondering why you haven't bought those and stuck with, I guess, Correxite.

MR. SUTTLES: Yeah, let me start with explaining what these dispersants do, whether they're applied on the surface or in the subsurface. Their intent is to break the oil into much, much, much smaller droplets. And what that then does is allow the natural degradation process – the microbes in the water actually eat the oil. That's the process. That's why you use dispersants, it's to break it up into much, much smaller pieces and allow the natural process to be accelerated. So that's the way it works.

We've been using a Correxite product. We also have a second product now identified to use called Sea Brat (#)4, which we'll begin introducing into the process as well. One of the things we have to understand here is that we have to be able to supply these in sufficient quantities.

The good news about using it subsea is we should be able to use considerably less dispersants than we do when we have to apply it to the surface. So if it works as we've seen in the test, it should mean that there's much less oil on the surface, which means our total dispersant usage will drop significantly. And we should be able to monitor or report on that over the next few days.

REAR ADM. LANDRY: Can I add something? It's important to also understand that the Correxite and others that are being used are part of an equipment list that has been approved

by the federal government and the states through the regional response teams and the national response teams. It's important to understand that there was a preapproval for this ahead of time. And this is not done just by willy nilly, anybody can take a product and put it out there. It's been analyzed in studies as far as what the potential impact is.

Now, as far as new technologies and new opportunities for use of products that people are coming forward with, we are really trying to actively engage with those offers because this is an opportunity for us to do more study and analysis. And we've set up a special team for that through the national response team and the regional response teams. The federal government and the state governments obviously work together and working with science labs such as LSU and coastal science centers.

We're going to take a look at these new technologies and these new offers. But we have preapproved commodities that are being used now that have gone through this testing and analysis. I would caution us to not get too far ahead in using something that hasn't been tested and analyzed and preapproved for use on a wide scale. You can go small scale, but I wouldn't go wide scale.

SEC. SALAZAR: Other questions? How about from the – take it to the phone? For the phone lines?

LT. CMDR. WYMAN: Operator, at this time, please open the line to questions from the callers.

OPERATOR: All right. Thank you. We will start the question-and-answer session. If you'd like to ask a question, please press *1 and un-mute your phone to record your name. And please remember, one question per line and please stand by for the first question. Our first question is from Matt Gutman, ABC News. Your line is open.

Q: Thank you. Mr. Suttles, I wonder if you could tell us what specifically went wrong with the insertion tube today.

MR. SUTTLES: My understanding is that there was an effort to try to put the insertion tube in last night. There is now a second effort underway because that did not work. And the latest that I had from BP is that they hope to be able to have it in place tonight.

But I want to just comment, Matt, on how this whole thing is really being looked at from our perspective. You know, the first is that these are essentially flow mitigation measures. This is not going to – essentially there are three steps to this: The first is to deal with flow mitigation and to try to stop as much of the leak as possible. And that's what this riser insertion procedure is. The second is to essentially stop the well from flowing and that's going to be the kill efforts that will be underway this week. And then the third will be the ultimate relief well that won't be drilled until August.

But it's our hope that through all these efforts that are going that are underway with BP and the global community that has come together to look at all these different options, overseen

now by the group of smartest people on the planet under Secretary Chu's leadership, that the steps that are being taken are the appropriate steps to try to bring this incident into control.

LT. CMDR. WYMAN: Operator, next question please.

OPERATOR: Next question is from Joel Achenbach, Washington Post. Your line is open.

Q: Yeah, thanks for the question. I didn't really hear an answer to that last question. What happened when you tried to put the riser insertion down there? Can Mr. Suttles give his answer to that?

SEC. SALAZAR: Well, I will have Doug answer that, the specific question. I will say this: Every morning at – first thing in the morning, we get an update on what exactly is going on. You know, BP has missed the deadline with respect to the scheduled activities that it has underway in a number of different ways.

It reflects a reality that they're operating in a very difficult circumstance and in conditions that are very difficult to essentially put in some of the mechanisms that they are trying to put in. As to the exact reasons why the first effort on the riser insertion didn't work, let me turn that over to Doug Suttles, so I'm not guessing as to what exactly happened. Doug?

MR. SUTTLES: Yeah. Thank you, Secretary Salazar. Actually, I fully agree with what the secretary has just said. So the challenge here is working in 5,000 feet of water. We've talked about that a lot. What happened last night, this tool sits in a metal frame so that the drill pipe lowered from the Discoverer Enterprise, the drillship, can connect to it. When they attempted to connect to it, the frame shifted so they were unable to make that connection.

So what they had to do was bring the frame and the tool back to the surface and reorient the frame so that the next attempt to connect would be more successful. So that's the explicit problem we had last night. The adjusted frame and the tool are now back on the seabed and as we speak they'll be attempting to make the connection.

LT. CMDR. WYMAN: Operator, we have time for one last question.

OPERATOR: Okay, our last question is from Liz Robbins, New York Times. Your line is open.

Q: Yes, Mr. Suttles. Just a follow-up on that. You mentioned how difficult it is to be working 5,000 feet below the surface. In this instance with the riser, was it a temperature problem or a pressure problem that caused the pipe not to be connected?

MR. SUTTLES: No, it was actually just the mechanical act of trying to take this 5,000-foot-long string of pipe and connect it to this tool. You can imagine trying to do that – it's essentially a mile long – and to what we would call "stab into" or connect into this particular tool. Once we insert the tool into the pipe, of course, the reason we're using this insertion tool

technique is to try to exclude the water so that we won't have the hydrate problem we had the previous time with the containment dome.

LT. CMDR. WYMAN: Operator, thank you. Thank you everybody. That concludes our press conference today. We will have people who stay behind to help you out. Thank you.

(END)